land to private parties for development during 1995-96.

(e) Does not arise.

Proposal to raise water charges for Industry

4543. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has proposed to raise the water charegs for industry;

(b) if so, the reasons which led to submit such proposal; and

(c) the details of steps taken to avoid frequent increase in water charges for the indsutry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Water cess is levied to augment the financial resources of State Pollution Control Boards. The present responsibilities of State Boards are continuing to increase resulting in requirement of additional resources. Further, the level of existing cess rates has not proved sufficient to motivate consumers to reduce water consumption. This has been confirmed through several studies. These studies strongly argue that the water charges should be commensurate with the cost of effluent treatment, and push consumers to promote water conservaton by making industries pay more for higher water consumption. It is thus necessary that these charges are revised, whenever required, in relation to the cost of effeuent treatment.

Creation of a movement to save Historical Monuments

4544. SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Environmental Society has demanded creation of a movement to save the country's historical monuments like the Taj Mahal.

(b) if so, the details therefor. with objectives;

(c) whether a large number of archaeological sites and historical monuments of the country are getting affected by variations in weather, rainfall and different pollutents in the air;

(d) if so, the names of each, with locations, and reasons for variations in each case;

(e) whether Government propose to involve experts from regulatory bodies of Government Research Institutions, Universities, Industries and Non-Governmental organisatioss to work out plans and programmes to preserve the Taj Mahal, on a sustained basis; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) The Indian Environmental Society had issued a press note stressing the need to bring together various experts from the regulatory bodies of the Government, Research Institutions, Universties, Industries and non-governmental organisations to work out plans and programmes to preserve the country's historical monuments.

(c) and (d) The effects of weather and rainfall on the archaeological sites and historical monuments of the country are a continuous process, which have been going on for centuries. Environmental Pollution also has an adverse effect on marble, sandstone and other building materials. However, no specific signs of accelerated decay of the monuments due to environmental pollution have been conclusively proved so far.

(e) and (f) In compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court, Government has already constituted an

Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Varadarajan to undertake a survey of the Agra-Mathura trapezium and to submit a report regarding the sources of pollution in the trapezium and the necessary measures to control them. The members of this committee are persons of scientific eminence and representatives from Government organisations.

Search of an India Bound Ship by the US Navy

4545. SHRI K. R. MALKANI:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the U.S. Navy intercepted and searched the Ship Gulf Splendour, manned by an all-Indian crew and carrying 2,200 tonnes of dried dates from Abadan, Iran, to India, as reported in 'The Pioneer' dated the 5th February, 1995;

(b) whether the ship held in Umm-al-Quwain in U.A.E.;

(c) whether the USA accuses India of having loaded the stuff in Iraq; and

(d) if so, whether it is an offence under any International law or U.N. resolution to trade food-stuffs with Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) The Ship "Gulf Splendour" intercepted by the US Navy has since been released. The US authorities have stated that the ship, which was owned by a private company, had loaded dates in Iraq. Under the UN Security Council resolution 661, import of all commodities and products originating in Iraq or exported therefrom is prohibited.

Bilateral Relations with Maldives

4546. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether steps have been taken by Government for strengthening bilateral ties with Maldives; and

(b) if so, the details of assistance offered by Government to that island country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The assistance offered by the Government of India to Maldives includes ongoing cooperation in the manning, equipping and functioning of the 200-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial hospital; the construction and equipping of an institute for vocational and technical training and in human resources development, and preservation of monuments. In addition Government of India offers scholarships for training of Maldivian personnel in technical, engineering and vocational courses. Proposal for cooperation in the fields of distance education, and environment are also under discussion.

Visit of Iranian President

4547. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Iranian President visited India in the third week of April, 1995;

(b) if so, the gist of talks the foreign dignitary had with Government;

(c) the leaders, the foreign dignitary met during his visit to the country;